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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine (1) which actions municipal employees consider important to a city's overall public relations effort, (2) the attitudes of city employees toward public service activities, (3) the relationship between attitude and job satisfaction, and (4) ways to improve employee attitudes and, perhaps, public service performance. Quantitative data were gathered from over 70% of the employees of a midwestern municipality (population 40,000) during a series of communication-oriented workshops. The purpose of the workshops was not only to gather data but to train public service employees in communication techniques and public relations. Results confirmed the importance of the link between communication and job satisfaction. "External" duties--those involving interaction with the public--were identified as most important to the public relations effort. Employees' attitudes toward public service was generally good, and there was a strong correlation between job satisfaction and communication (happier employees are more likely to communicate about specific issues). Based on the results, specific recommendations for municipal employee training programs designed to enhance public service related attitudes, and thus improve a city's overall public relations program, were developed. (Tables of data and 19 references are included.) (AEW)

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PUTTING THE "PUBLIC" FIRST IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE PUBLIC SERVICE ATTITUDES, JOB SATISFACTION AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

PUTTING THE "PUBLIC" FIRST IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE PUBLIC SERVICE ATTITUDES, JOB SATISFACTION AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES

The service sector of our economy, which accounts for nearly 70 percent of the GNP and over 70 percent of the employment, is viewed by experts and laymen alike as needing help in improving its primary product--service. To many, improving service in the public sector, including local municipalities, is even more vital.

This paper reports the results of a two-part study designed to answer the following questions: What actions/activities do municipal employees consider important to a city's overall public relations effort? What is the underlying structure of city employee attitudes regarding these public service activities? What is the relationship between that attitudinal structure and other job-related variables, such as job satisfaction. And, finally, are there identifiable employee communication patterns that might be used by public relations practitioners to improve public service attitudes, and perhaps, performance.

Researchers concentrated on one of two major clusters of public service actions/activities identified by municipal employees as being relevant to the city's public relations program--an "external" or Public Contact cluster. Quantitative data were then gathered from over 70 percent of the employees of a mid-western municipality with a population of 40,000 in a case study approach. Grunig's Situational Theory was used to guide the effort designed to describe employee communication behavior and identify issues relating to employee attitudes regarding the Public Contact actions/activities.

Factor analysis revealed three dimensions to the employee Public Contact attitudes: a "Public Interaction" factor, "Intrapersonal" factor, and a "Perceptions of Others" factor. Correlational analysis revealed positive relationships between Job Satisfaction and the latter two dimensions. Grunig's Situational Theory validated the identification of four issues about which these city employees have high problem recognition, low feelings of constraint and high involvement. Consistent with the Situational Theory, employees are active information processors and seekers regarding these issues.

Correlational analysis was then used to investigate the relationship of the theoretical and communication variables to the Public Contact dimensions as well as Job Satisfaction. The results show that one issue--related to budgetary concerns--is strongly related to Public Contact attitudes. Further, Job Satisfaction is related to information seeking and processing. Consequently, specific recommendations for municipal employee training programs designed to enhance public service related attitudes, and hence improve a city's overall public relations program, are offered.

PUTTING THE "PUBLIC" FIRST IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE PUBLIC SERVICE ATTITUDES, JOB SATISFACTION AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES

INTRODUCTION

The headline on a recent Time magazine cover story about service in our economy summed up the frustrations of millions of Americans when it implored: "Pul-eeze! Will somebody help me?"[1] The article went on to detail the decline of the service ethic in our society and suggested that if the U.S. economy is to thrive, the service concept will have to be "serviced."

The experts agree. Management consultants James Quinn and Christopher Gagnon note that "U.S.-based services offer even more opportunity for growth--and for mismangement--than product-based industries did in the past."[2] They add, "while there is still time, it is essential to take a hard look at how we think about services, how we manage them, and how much they contribute to the nation's economic health."[3]

Quinn and Gagnon lament that many persons still characterize the service sector in our economy as being devoted to making hamburgers and shining shoes. Quinn and Gagnon say, in reality, the service sector is highly complex, sophisticated, and accounts for more than 68% of the GNP and 71% of the nation's employment.[4]

Fortunately, at the same time the service sector is becoming more complex, so is the thinking about how to improve

performance within it. For instance, suggestions range from restructuring large organizations into "Co-Corps," which operate for the purpose of benefitting the public instead of making profits,[5] to devoting more study to "emotional labor."

The latter term was coined by Hochschild to describe a "part of a distinctly patterned yet invisible emotional system--a system composed of individual acts of 'emotion work,' social 'feeling rules,' and a great variety of exchanges between people in private and public life."[6] Hochschild's research with flight attendants and bill collectors, documents the fact that in a service industry "the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself."[7]

With the problem of "poor service" perceived as being so pervasive, there is no doubt that public relations practitioners throughout all segments of our society will be called upon to help provide remedies. It could be that programs devoted to helping organizations improve their services to the public may become the new growth area for public relations.

Public relations practitioners venturing into this arena will not find the environment alien. In fact, management principles designed to improve service within an organization sound very similar to principles designed to improve public relations. When describing their "service management concept," Albrecht and Zemke[8] say:

> First, as a result of working in and with organizations, we are biased to believe that high

> quality service at the front line has to start with a concept of service that exists in the minds of top management. This service concept must find its way into the structure and operation of the organization.
>
> We also believe in the value and importance of measuring service. An intimate and objective knowledge of how you are doing--in the customer's eyes--is critical. Market research, the service audit, and a process for measuring service quality and feeding back this information to the frontline people are crucial ingredients in moving an organization to a high level of service orientation.

Albrecht and Zemke's notion of providing employee feedback--and hence, training--is seen by most experts as a crucial component in the process of improving organizational service.[9] Organizations frequently cited as having outstanding service are the same ones cited for having outstanding employee training and development programs.[10] As indicated above, it can be argued that the public relations practitioner is the best person within an organization to provide this employee feedback and training. Consequently, this paper is designed to support that view and offer guidance for those practitioners undertaking such a venture.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

If the concept of improved public service is important to the private sector, it is even more important in the public sector. Government at all levels--federal, state and local--is increasingly challenged to be more responsive to the public. And, often times, "responsive" translates into providing more services with less tax dollars.

The pressure to improve service is particularly intense on the local municipal level--not only because taxpapayers have a greater opportunity to be "responsive" themselves (by not passing millages) but because of the closer social contract that exists among those who live in the same community. Citizens simply expect better service from municipal workers who are their friends and neighbors.

Nevertheless, public service by municipalities is considered to have declined along with that provided by other organizations. Often times, employee unionization is cited as the reason for this decline.[11-13] Although, in some studies more employee-centered variables (such as job satisfaction) are linked to municipal worker efficiency.[14]

If, as suggested above, public relations practitioners are going to be called upon to help improve organizational public service performance by municipalities, there is a good deal of formulative research that needs to be done. Specifically, public relations practitioners need to begin answering the following questions:

1: What are some of the components of "public service" that municipal employees link to an overall municipal public relations program. In other words, what <u>actions/activities</u> do employees <u>themselves</u> consider to be important to an overall public relations effort.

2: What is the underlying structure of city employee

attitudes regarding these public service activities. In other words, given that public service actions are important to an overall public relations effort, what is the state of employee attitudes regarding these variables.

3: What is the relationship between that attitudinal structure and other job-related variables, such as job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is an often investigated variable in organizational communication research and, as noted above, other research has linked it to public employee performance.

4: Finally, are there identifiable municipal employee communication patterns that might be used by public relations practitioners to improve the public service attitudes, and perhaps, performance.

This paper reports on the results of one exploratory study designed to contribute answers to these questions.

RESEARCH SETTING, UNDERLYING THEORY & METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Responding to the pressure to improve service by employees, a number of municipalities, linked to a mid-western state association of municipal governments, instituted a series of workshops designed to achieve objectives consistent with Albrecht and Zemke's recommendations. First started in late 1985, the workshops are continuing in 1987 and have been designed with help from the Center for Communication at a mid-western state university. Faculty members from several communication-related departments at the university lead the

workshops, which have two objectives:

First, to provide "frontline" training to municipal employees in communication techniques, principles of public relations and the role of good public service in a municipal government's public relations program.

Second, to provide a vehicle for gathering data related to the research questions highlighted above. This latter objective helps to close the "feedback" loop by providing researchers with information to help improve training.

To date, over a dozen sessions have been held in municipalities that range in classification from "small town" to "metropolitan area." In essence, the process has been a learning experience for all concerned. Hundreds of municipal employees have received training and the researchers have gained valuable insight and knowledge about this relatively unexplored area of public relations. One goal of this paper is to share some of this knowledge in the hope that it stimulates further research.

The methodology involved in this research process has been traditional in nature in that both qualititative and quantitative techniques were used. Specifically, for the first year of the project, qualitative techniques were used to identify and distill major themes, issues and concerns of municipal employees regarding public service and public relations. Later, quantitative techniques were used to further

investigate and validate the qualititative findings. In essence, qualitative methods were used to gather data needed to answer the first research question and quantitative methods were used to gather data for the last three research questions.

Qualitative Methods

As indicated above, a qualitiative approach was used for approximately the first year that the training sessions were held to determine what actions and activities municipal employees considered relevant to an overall public relations effort.

While the specifics vary slightly in each situation, the general framework for the training sessions is as follows: The sessions are held in a municipal facility and are designed to be four hours in length, allowing two sessions a day. Employees are given release time to attend one or the other session and generally are not separated by department or classification. Depending upon the size of the municipal workforce, the number of session participants ranges from 25 to 100. The workshop format utilizes a combination of lecture, small group and individual teaching techniques by two to four instructors.

At each session, participants are asked to identify issues that they consider important to their role as municipal employees and public servants. Further, they are asked to describe situations (both positive and negative) that they consider relevant to the city's overall public relations effort.

In addition to utilizing this information for pedogogical purposes during the sessions, researchers categorize and record these employee observations.

Quantitative Methods

While the qualitative techniques used in the study are "atheoretical," the quantitative techniques have been developed from a definite theoretical perspective. To guide this phase of the study, Grunig's Situational Theory[15] is considered to be particularly appropriate.

This theory is well documented, as Grunig and others continue to utilize this perspective in a variety of settings. However, it is considered especially relevant for organizational communication-related research (such as this project) because this is the area where it has received the most refinement.

Essentially, Grunig says that persons communicate, and have attitudes about, specific situations--not broad generalizations. His research has shown that at least three variables (sometimes four) are responsible for how often and how much persons will communicate about the specific issues. These include the degree to which the person considers the issue a "problem" (problem recognition), whether the person feels he/she can do anything about the issue (constraint recognition) and how "involved" the person considers him/herself to be with the issue (level of involvement). Grunig considers communication to include both

information seeking and information processing.

Grunig's approach was considered to be especially relevant for this study in light of his recent work that related measures of job satisfaction (an important variable in this study) to his theoretical measures.[16]

Consequently, once researchers felt confident about their identification of the issues, concerns and situations that municipal employees considered to be relevant to public service, measuring instrument items were developed to gather data about the underlying attitudes regarding these issues. Because this was an exploratory study, the researchers decided to concentrate on one major cluster of these concerns (explained below) in an effort to provide a sharper focus for later research. These items provided data to contribute answers to the second research question. To gather data relevant to the third and fourth research questions, specific techniques used by Grunig to measure his theoretical variables, as well as job satisfaction, were adapted for this study.

The result of this effort was an instrument that combined measures of "public service" attitudes and job satisfaction, as well as measures of information seeking, information processing, problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement with/about <u>specific issues</u> related to public service. (This approach is considered to be consistent with Grunig's theory. Instead of asking city employees how they

"feel" about public service, a better approach is to gather measures about issue/topics that relate to public service.) In addition, a number of demographic variables were measured as well.[17]

To gather data needed to contribute answers to the research questions, the measuring instrument was administered to employees of a municipality with a total population of nearly 40,000 in late Spring, 1986. While all municipalities have unique characteristics, the one chosen for this case study is "typical" in many ways of other mid-western cities of the same size. There are slightly over 100 employees (ranging from the city manager to public works laborer) divided into four divisions.

Sixty-nine, or over 70 percent of eligible employees completed the questionnaire at one of two workshop sessions conducted as described above. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were male and nearly 40 percent were between the ages of 36 and 45. Fifty-six percent have worked for the city ten years or less. The amount of time spent with the public each day ranges from "none" (6.2%), to "all day" (16.9%) with most (27.7%) having two-three hours of public contact.

The respondents were representative of those employed in all four divisions: (Public Works (44.3%), Public Safety (18 %), Finance & Records (13.2%) and Community Affairs (24.6%). In fact, a municipality of this size was chosen for the case study

aspect of the study in order to insure a high percentage of representative employee participation. For this formulative study, the trade-off that results in a smaller N for greater accurracy was deemed important by the researchers for purposes of validity. Consequently, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results of this study beyond the municipality investigated.

The rationale for each set of items and the statistical procedures used to analyze them will be explained as each set of variables is presented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Question 1: Public Service Activities/Actions Analysis of the interactions with municipal employees as part of the training workshop process indicates there are two major categories, or clusters, of activities/actions that employees link to public service and an overall public relations campaign.

The first, which could be labeled as an "External" cluster, deals with activities related to "contacts" with the public by municipal employees. Some examples of these kinds of activities include:

- *Providing solutions to citizen problems
- *Dealing with a wide range of "types" of citizens
- *Promoting citizen understanding of city policies
- *Establishing working relationships with citizens

An anecdotal example that illustrates these kinds of

activities would be a situation where street department employees are completing road work in a neighborhood and are asked by a senior citizen to trim a tree branch in her backyard that she believes is causing a dangerous condition. Adhering to city policies, the workers would be prohibited from assisting the citizen. Yet, the citizen views municipal workers as "public servants," and indeed, the employees recognize that solving her problem (which may take only a few minutes) would generate a good deal of positive feelings about the city. Nevertheless, the employees have to make a decision about "how and what" to tell the citizen to prevent creating negative feelings. (They may just go ahead and trim the branch in spite of departmental policy, or, tell the citizen "No" for liability reasons.)

The second, which could be labeled as an "Internal" cluster, appears to relate to organizational structural factors Grunig identifies in recent research.[18] Some examples of these kinds of activities listed by city employees include:

*Inefficient/inadequate training of employees

*Implementing effective management techniques

*Eliminating the overlapping of job responsibilities

An anecdotal illustration of these kinds of activities is found in the example of Public Safety division employees reporting situations to the Public Works division that citizens consider to be "problems," and becoming frustrated because Public Works ineffeciency prevents the citizens' concerns from

receiving attention. Ultimately, Public Safety employees begin to "go around" the Public Works department and solve the problems themselves. Rightly or wrongly, Public Safety employees perceive they are demonstrating a greater degree of "public service" and resent the lack of committment by Public Works employees. Consequently, they believe any public relations effort by the city is negatively affected by poor performance on the part of one division or department.

Because of the wide scope of the two major activity/action categories, the decision was made to focus this preliminary investigation on the first, or External, cluster of activities during the case study phase. By focusing on these variables first, the researchers believed they could enhance the feedback necessary to provide "front-line" training.

Question 2: Attitudes Toward Activities/Actions Thus, to obtain a measure of employee attitudes toward these specific actions, a series of Likert-type statements was developed from discussion items that emerged during previous training sessions. The items reflected specific "public contact" concerns expressed by employees during previous sessions and called for "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" responses (five point scale). To minimize a response set, the "direction" of some items was reversed. However, all items were coded so that the higher the mean, the more positive the response.

The Public Contact items are the first nine listed in Table

I and an examination of the means shows that, in general, employees in this municipality have "positive" attitudes about their contacts with local citizens. For instance, they do not believe the citizens they deal with are "cranks, oddballs or deadbeats" nor do they mind interruptions by requests for information or help.

However, because this was an exploratory study, it was considered important to investigate the underlying attitudinal dimensions reflected in the responses. Consequently, these items were factor analyzed and those results are presented in Table I as well.

As can be seen, three distinct factors emerged for these Public Contact items. The first, labeled a "Public Interaction" factor, contains items that center around the actual interaction of city employees with citizens. It reflects concerns about the type of relationship they have with citizens on a day-to-day basis. The second dimension is labeled as an "Intrapersonal" factor[19] because it contains items that describe how the employee feels internally about his or her dealings with the public. The third dimension is labeled as a "Perception of Others" factor. Items that load on this factor describe how the employee views others in the public service relationship.

For use in further analysis, items that loaded on each of the factors were used to create scales or indices for each dimension. The means for each Index can be found in Table I.

This process makes it easier to see that, for employees in this municipality, attitudes about Public Contact activities are generally positive. The only exception is the Intrapersonal dimension, which is slightly negative.

Question 3: Job-Related Variables There were two job-related variables thought to have a relationship to Public Contact and public service attitudes. The first was job satisfaction. As noted above, previous research has linked job satisfaction to public employee performance. Also, as Grunig relates, job satisfaction and organization communication are often linked. (Although, he believes job satisfaction is more a product of structural factors than organizational communication.)[16]

The second job-related factor investigated was the time each employee spends with the public each day. In any municipality, some employees have a lot of public contact, others have very little. It makes sense to suspect that the amount of daily contact may have some relationship to attitudes about that contact.

To measure job satisfaction, two items Grunig used for the same purpose were incorporated into this study. These items were included in the factor analysis of Public Contact items and, as expected, they loaded on a separate factor. Consequently, a Job Satisfaction Index was created. The items, means, and factor loadings are presented in Table I. As can be seen, the employees

in this city are relatively satisfied with their job.

As for the other job-related variable, as explained above, employees were asked to indicate the amount of time they spend with the public each day. The largest percentage spend two to three hours with the public each day.

Table II presents the results of correlating the Public Contact indices with Job Satisfaction and time spent with the public. The data show there is a positive correlation between Job Satisfaction and the Intrapersonal and Perceptions of Others attitudes. While it is impossible to assign any causality, it does appear that if a city employee has positive internal feelings about his/her relationship to the public and positive feelings about others in the process, the more likely he/she is to be satisfied with the job.

In many ways this is not surprising. But, as noted below, it does suggest that those who are concerned about improving employee attitudes about public service may want to investigate the relationship further.

What is surprising, perhaps, is the lack of a linear relationship between the Public Contact attitudes and time spent with the public. Conventional wisdom, (and, indeed, even some management research) would suggest that "burn-out" occurs with increased public contact. Further investigation may reveal that this municipality utilizes techniques (such as rotating employees on the front desk) to minimize negative reactions.

Question 4: Communication Variables To date, most of the research using the Situational Theory has been conducted for the purpose of identifying "publics." Grunig collects data on the three or four theoretical variables (as independent variables) and relates them to the dependent communication variables. He further discriminates among respondents to identify those types (or publics) that communicate in similar ways. Because this process is so well established, what has been overlooked is the utility of the theoretical and communication variables for their own sake. In other words, given that the variables and the types of publics they identify are valid and consistent (as demonstrated in Grunig's 15 years of research with situational theory) there is merit in utilizing them in ways other than for the identification of publics.

In this study, the theoretical and communication variables are useful for describing the communication behavior of the employees as a whole, and validating the identification of issues suspected of relating to the other variables of importance--specifically, attitudes about Public Contact and Job Satisfaction.

Here, based on their interactions with municipal employees, researchers believed there were four issues or items that might be related to Public Contact attitudes and Job Satisfaction:

1. City ordinances and regulations
2. The best way to handle citizen complaints

3. The quality of city services to residents

4. Obtaining an adequate budget to properly perform services

The rationale for suspecting why these issues are important to municipal workers is not hard to discern. Much of a city worker's behavior is governed by ordinances and regulations. In many cases, the ordinances are the employee's "reason for being." Unfortunately, many city residents are not always happy with the ordinances or the way they are enforced. Consequently, dealing with complaints is a major component of a city worker's job. Nevertheless, discussions with municipal workers indicate most are truly concerned about providing quality service to citizens. Yet, they seem to believe their efforts are often hampered by the lack of an adequate budget.

The procedures used to measure the theoretical and communication variables are those recommended or utilized by Grunig. For the theoretical variables, respondents are asked how often they stop to think about the issues (Problem Recognition), whether they can do anything personally that would make a difference in the way the issues are handled (Constraint Recognition), and to what extent they see a connection between themselves and the issue (Level of Involvement). Responses are coded on a four-point scale.

For the communication variables, respondents were asked how they would treat the receipt of a memo about each of the issues (Information Processing): read it immediately, put it aside to

read when time is available, skim it briefly, or not read it at all. In addition, they were asked how likey they would be to attend a voluntary meeting after work hours about each of the issues (Information Seeking): very likely, somewhat likely, not likely, not attend.

Table III confirms that these are important issues to municipal employees. In general, these city employees think about the specific issues frequently (high problem recognition), believe they can do something about the issues (low feelings of constraint) and consider themselves to be involved with the specific issues (high involvement). In addition, city employees are active information "processors" and "seekers" of information about the four issues.

A closer examination reveals some interesting findings, however. For instance, the most "active" issue is the one dealing with complaint handling. Employees consider this to be the issue they think about the most and the one with which they are most involved. Fortunately, they also believe they can do something about how complaints are handled. And, just as the Situational Theory would predict, this is the issue about which employees are most likely to communicate.

The issue associated with the greatest degree of constraint has to do with obtaining an adequate budget. For what ever reasons, city employees feel they have less control over this issue than any of the others. Predictably, they are less likly

to process or seek information about this issue compared to the others.

Table IV presents the relationship of the theoretical and communication variables to the Public Contact indices. The two indices that contain signficant correlations are Intrapersonal and Perceptions of Others--the same two that are positively correlated with Job Satisfaction.

The cluster of attitudes that co-varies the most with the theoretical variables is the Perception of Others group. Two of the significant correlations (both negative) relate to the same issue: city ordinances. What this suggests is that employees with a greater sense of involvement and a lack of constraint on this issue are the same ones with less positive attitudes about others in their public contact relationships. Nevertheless, Table IV shows that those employees who score "positively" on this dimension are most likely to process or seek information about obtaining an adequate budget, complaint handling and the quality of city services.

It is worthy of note that the single issue with the largest number of significant correlations is the one that relates to "obtaining an adequate budget to properly perform city services." Again, without assigning any degree of causality, the results suggest that those employees who are most likely to communicate about underlying budget concerns are the same ones who feel good about their dealings with the public and have

positive perceptions of others involved in the process.

Table IV also shows the relationship of Job Satisfaction to the theoretical and communication variables. One of the most interesting findings of this study is the strong relationship between information processing and information seeking with job satisfaction. The strong positive correlations show that the more satisfied an employee is with his/her job, the more likely he/she is to communicate about the specific issues. Job satisfaction is also strongly correlated with problem recognition for "quality of service" and "obtaining an adequate budget" issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn and observations that should be made from the results of this study. These should be of use to both public relations practitioners and researchers interested in improving municipal public service/public relations programs.

The results of this study support the often stated notion that "actions speak louder than words" in public relations. In spite of the fact that public relations techniques are most often "communication-related" techniques, this study demonstrates that non-communication actions and activites (identified here in External and Internal clusters) are linked to the overall public relations effort of a municipality by those intimately involved--municipal employees. What this means

for a municipality, of course, is that a public relations program will be seen as ineffective by employees if the municipality is providing poor public service to the community.

****The clusters of relevant activities are complex and multi-faceted. The Public Contact cluster, selected for investigation in the case study, appears to have at least three dimensions. Of these, the Intrapersonal and Perceptions of Others dimensions seem to be the most important. Consequently, the fact that the mean for the Intrapersonal index is slightly negative for this group of employees should raise a red flag for city officials concerned about improving attitudes toward public service.

****It is important to investigate the relationship of the Internal cluster of activities to public service/public relations. It may be, as Grunig suggests, that these structural variables are the more important ones for researchers concerned about organizational communication and effectiveness. Certainly municipal employees link these kinds of activities to an overall public relations effort.

****The positive correlation of Job Satisfaction with the Intrapersonal and Perceptions of Others dimensions suggests those concerned with improving municipal employee attitudes about public contact and public service may want to investigate the relationship further.

For instance, it may be that by developing training programs

designed to improve the employee's internal feelings and help him/her understand how the public may view city employees, job satisfaction could increase. Or, it may be more constructive to "massage" the relationship from the other direction: undertake programs to improve job satisfaction (by altering Grunig's structural variables, for instance) and the employee's attitude toward the public may improve.

****Using Grunig's Situational Theory to validate the identification of important issues seems to be fruitful. For example, in this study the methodological approach associated with the Situational theory identified the budget issue as being particularly important to these employees. The correlational analysis of this issue with the other variables holds a number of implications for training programs. For instance, it may be that efforts to explain and encourage communication about budgetary matters would pay off in greater employee job satisfaction and enhanced attitudes about public service.

Further, it is not necessary to only use Grunig's methodology to identify employee publics or groups. For instance, in this municipality, there are significant correlations between job satisfaction and two of the public contact dimensions. Consequently, to identify specific employees who might benefit from additional public contact training, city officials could look at the demographics of those who score below the mean on Job Satisfaction--and hence, lower on the

"Intrapersonal" and "Perceptions of Others" scales

****This study confirms the importance of employee communication to job satisfaction. Although, it is important to note that the relationship investigated here was between communication behavior (not the more commonly investigated variable of communication satisfaction) and job satisfaction. But, clearly, city officials who lament, "if dissatisfied employees would only read the information we provide them, then they would see what we are talking about," need to realize that dissatisfied employees are less likely to process information, much less seek it. This finding does not discount the importance of communicating with city employees, it only means that additional techniques to improve job satisfaction should be considered as well.

****Finally, it almost goes without saying that it is important for researchers to pursue the relationship between public service attitudes, job satisfaction and internal communication if they are to help municipalities work to improve public service and public relations. The results of this study have to be considered preliminary until others validate them with research in other cities.

TABLE I

PUBLIC CONTACT AND JOB SATISFACTION ITEM & INDEX MEANS, FACTOR LOADINGS AND COMMUNALITIES

ITEM	MEAN	INTERACTION FACTOR	INTRAPERSONAL FACTOR	PERCEPTION FACTOR	JOB-SATISFACTION FACTOR	COMMUNALITY
PUBLIC CONTACT						
1. I'm not embarrassed to have to say "no" to requests from citizens.	3.81	.74	.06	-.03	-.17	.58
2. I prefer a business-like relationship with citizens who try to tell me their personal troubles.	2.79	-.71	.04	.21	.02	.55
3. I don't mind it when people interrupt my work with requests for information or help.	3.97	.59	-.11	-.05	.02	.52
4. I feel uncomfortable when I have to admit to a citizen I don't know the answer to a question directed at me.	3.03	.06	.84	.11	.04	.73
5. I'm frustrated with my limited authority to provide solutions to citizen inquiries.	2.88	-.07	.74	.03	.11	.57
6. Most citizens understand the reasons for our department policies.	2.92	.20	.03	-.65	.13	.49
7. I feel that most of the public I deal with is made up of cranks, oddballs and deadbeats.	4.00	-.07	.27	.64	.20	.53
8. My boss appreciates what I have to put up with from the public.	3.61	-.30	.38	-.59	.34	.69
9. After the first few hours of the day I know I'll hear the same old stories from every citizen who comes along.	3.46	-.30	.24	.54	.38	.58
JOB SATISFACTION						
10. I look forward to coming to work almost every day.	3.56	.15	-.01	.01	.85	.75
11. On the whole, my job is challenging and interesting.	4.06	-.23	.33	.00	.73	.69
INDEX MEAN		3.52	2.96	3.47	3.80	

Scale: 1=Negative 5=Positive

TABLE II

CORRELATIONS OF PUBLIC CONTACT INDICES WITH JOB SATISFACTION AND TIME SPENT WITH PUBLIC

	JOB SATISFACTION	TIME SPENT
PUBLIC INTERACTION INDEX	.01	.16
INTRAPERSONAL INDEX	.26*	.13
PERCEPTION OF OTHERS INDEX	.41**	.13

*p=.05 **p=.01

TABLE III

MEANS OF SITUATIONAL THEORY AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT RELATED ISSUES

	ISSUE			
	CITY ORDINANCES	HANDLING COMPLAINTS	QUALITY OF SERVICE	OBTAINING BUDGET
VARIABLE				
Problem Recognition	3.18	3.48	3.47	2.83
Constraint Recognition	2.52	2.92	2.61	2.15
Level of Involvement	3.00	3.28	3.10	2.48
Information Processing	3.54	3.75	3.56	3.18
Information Seeking	2.97	3.12	3.02	2.82

(Four-point Scale)

TABLE IV

CORRELATIONS OF SITUATIONAL THEORY AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES WITH PUBLIC CONTACT AND JOB SATISFACTION INDICES

	INTERACTION INDEX	INTRAPERSONAL INDEX	PERCEPTION INDEX	JOB SATISFACTION
PROBLEM RECOGNITION				
City Ordinances	.00	.11	-.01	.09
Handling Complaints	.15	.11	.12	.18
Quality of Service	.13	.24*	.18	.40**
Obtaining Budget	-.04	.28*	.37**	.31**
CONSTRAINT RECOGNITION				
City Ordinances	.11	.11	-.27*	-.18
Handling Complaints	.07	.08	.12	.16
Quality of Service	-.01	.02	.05	.10
Obtaining Budget	-.04	.18	.11	.21
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT				
City Ordinances	-.06	.16	-.25*	.06
Handling Complaints	-.04	.05	-.02	-.04
Quality of Service	.08	.19	.21	.12
Obtaining Budget	.06	.19	.21	.09
INFORMATION PROCESSING				
City Ordinances	.18	-.04	-.04	.14
Handling Complaints	.07	.03	.19	.34**
Quality of Service	.11	-.06	.16	.32**
Obtaining Budget	.03	.07	.32**	.34**
INFORMATION SEEKING				
City Ordinances	.09	.19	.11	.39**
Handling Complaints	-.02	.13	.26*	.50**
Quality of Service	.05	.21	.32**	.49**
Obtaining Budget	-.11	.15	.31**	.38**

*p=.05 **p=.01

FOOTNOTES

[1]"Pul-eeze! Will Somebody Help Me?" Time, February 2, 1987, pp. 49-57.

[2]James Brian Quinn and Christoper E. Gagnon, "Will services follow manufacturing into decline?" Harvard Business Review, Nov-Dec. 1986, pp. 95-103.

[3] ibid.

[4] ibid.

[5]Abram T. Collier, "The Co-Corp: Big Business Can Re-form Itself," Harvard Business Review, Nov-Dec., 1979, p. 121.

[6]Arlie Russell Hochschild, The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) pp. x-ix.

[7]Hochschild, p. 5.

[8]Karl Albrecht and Ron Zemke, Service America!: Doing Business in the New Economy (Homewood, Illnois: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1985) p. vi.

[9]Albrecht and Zemke, p. 112.

[10]Lee Branst, "Disneyland--A Kingdom of Service Quality," Quality, 23: 16-18 (February, 1984).

[11]Charles W. Davis and Jonathan P. West, "Adopting Personnel Productivity Innovations in American Local Governments," Policy Studies Review, 4: 541-549 (February, 1985)

[12]James H. Seroka, "Local Public Employee Unionization: Trends and Implications for the Future," The Policy Studies Journal, 8:430-437 (Winter, 1979).

[13]Nancy DiTomaso, "Public Unions and the Urban Fiscal Crisis," The Insurgent Sociologist, 8: 191-205 (Fall, 1978).

[14]Rafael Lopez Pintor, "Satisfaction in Work and Formalism as Bureaucratic Phenomena: An Analysis of Attitudes in Chile," Revista Espanola de la Opinion Publica, 44: 101-145 (April-June, 1976).

[15]While Grunig has published a number of studies involving Situational Theory, perhaps the best explanation can be found in James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, Managing Public Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984) Chapter 7.

[16]James E. Grunig, "A Structural Reconceptualization of the Organizational Communication Audit, With Application To A State Department of Education," paper presented to the International Communication Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, May, 1985.

[17]A complete copy of the measuring instrument is available from the author upon request.

[18]Grunig, A Structural Reconceptualization.

[19]While, as a general rule it is best to define factors that have at least three loadings, because this was an exploratory study and both loadings are in the same direction, this factor was defined with two. See Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research (Belmont, California: Wadworth, 1983) p. 237.